George Barr McCutcheon.

What You Should Know About American Authors

IX. George Barr McCutcheon.

THE McCutcheons of the generation of George Barr, John and Ben are a highly talented family. There are those who think of George Barr McCutcheon as the brother of the creator of "Bird Center"; and there are those who think of John McCutcheon as the brother of the inventor of the Principality of Graustark. Had neither "Bird Center" or "Graustark" been discovered both of them would have basked in the reflected glory of being the brothers of Ben McCutcheon, who himself has shown decided literary ability.

It was in 1901 that George Barr McCutcheon came into conspicuous notice with "Graustark," the first of the romances associated with the name, in which he opened a new and profitable vein of that ore which Stevenson worked in "Prince Otto," and which Anthony Hope worked in "The Prisoner of Zenda" and its sequel, "Rupert of Hentzau." Incidentally, "Graustark" was one of those novels sold to a publisher for a lump sum. Mr. McCutcheon received $500 for the manuscript and considered himself an astute man of business. Fate, however, afterward made ample amends for that early error in financial judgment.

Mr. McCutcheon was born in 1866 in Tippecanoe county, Indiana. He was educated at Purdue University. At one time, in the early eighties, he was for a few months an actor with a very queer opera company. At an even earlier period of life he had run away with a circus, an experience that was reflected many years later in his novel of circus life, "The Rose in the Ring." His association with the opera company ended in the conventional way, according to the old time jokes in the comic papers. He walked home.

In later life Mr. McCutcheon has confessed that he has lost all aspirations for a career on the stage or in the sawdust ring. In fact, he was cured young. In 1889 he began work as a reporter on the Lafayette (Indiana) *Morning Journal*. In 1893 he was made the city editor of the Lafayette *Daily Courier*, a position that he held for several years, finding time to write occasional stories in connection with his regular work as a newspaper man.

Bibliographically considered, here is George Barr McCutcheon's *dossier*: "Graustark" (1901), "Castle Craneycrow" (1902), "The Sherrods" (1903), "The Day of the Dog" (1904), "Beverly of Graustark" (1904), "The Purple Parasol" (1905), "Nedra" (1905), "Cowardice Court" (1906), "Jane Cable" (1906), "The Flyers" (1907), "The Daughter of Anderson Crow" (1907), "The Husbands of Edith" (1908), "The Man from Brodney's" (1908), "The Alternative" (1909), "Truxton King" (1909), "The Butterfly Man" (1910), "The Rose in the Ring" (1910), "What's-His-Name" (1911), "Mary Midthorne" (1911), "Her Weight in Gold" (1912), "The Hollow of Her Hand" (1912), "A Fool and His Money" (1913), "Black Is White" (1914), "The Prince of Graustark" (1914), "Mr. Bingle" (1915), "The Light That Lies" (1916), "From the Housetops" (1916), "Green Fancy" (1917), "Shot With Crimson" (1918), "The City of Masks" (1918), "Sherry" (1919), "Anderson Crow, Detective" (1920), "West Wind Drift" (1920), "Quill's Window" (1921), and "Yollop" (1922). Mr. McCutcheon's novel for the autumn of this year, "Viola Gwyn," is announced for publication in September.

New Fiction

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pure dog action, and Mr. Curwood is as fully entitled to guess what Peter thinks as is any cold blooded, matter of fact scientist. Finally, in defiance of any critic, you can't help loving Peter, and you won't forget him.

Peter begins as the connecting link between the outlaw, who is jocularly known as Jolly Roger McKay, and the girl, Nada. McKay is hiding in the woods, and, of course, is "wanted" by the Mounted Police, whom he has been dodging for a long time, ever since he began a bold career of robbery from purely altruistic motives, to save an Indian tribe from the starvation which threatened them because of the wickedness of certain white men. His outlawry has a genuine touch of the Robin Hood about it. He has been guilty of no moral obliquity, but he has, incidentally, found it necessary to hold up the mails, which has given him a dangerous prominence among the hunted. Nada is a child of nature, an unfortunate orphan who has fallen into the hands of the very wicked Jed Hawkins, who has reared her with the intention of selling her as a "white slave" when she is old enough. The purchaser is ready when the dog, Peter, brings her into relations with McKay. Of course they fall in love and he saves her—Hawkins is killed, or apparently killed, and Nada thinks McKay has done it while he thinks she did it herself, but he is ready to assume the blame for it to save her. He is unwilling to take her into the life of an outlaw with him, though she yearns to go, so he runs away, as far north as possible, leaving her with a friendly priest.

But with that introductory taste the reader must be left to follow the intricate fortunes of both Jolly Roger and Nada for himself, through blizzards, the hazards of capture, escape, pursuit, forest fire, misunderstanding and heart wringing disappointments to the proper solution. The story wanders in among the primitive Indians, very far north, who are, by the way, quite plausible red men. There is a nice touch of the supernatural, or at least the supernormal, in the Indian woman's clairvoyance, whereby she aids McKay. As to that, it may be noted that such curious feats of the occult use of the mind among Indians are not wholly fiction. Mr. Curwood has a sound enough foundation for this espisode, which is very well handled.

It is not necessary to tell the large body of Curwood "fans" that this story moves rapidly; it is full of well motivated action from the start—an admirably told, really moving tale, providing entertainment and the food for dreams in rich measure.

THE CONFESSIONS OF A WELL MEANING WOMAN. By Stephen McKenna. George H. Doran Company.

MR. McKENNA is not altogether happily inspired in his choice of the form of this novel, which is that of a dramatic monologue, in the first person throughout. Lady Ann Spenworth is discoursing, in each chapter, to a "friend of proved discretion," giving her version of a number of episodes in her life and in that of her family. It is all done with extreme adroitness and cleverness on Mr. McKenna's part, but the effect is one of strain. The reader tires a little of the machinery of it after the wheels have been going 'round for several chapters, and rather wishes for a more direct view or for some variety in the manner of approach. The pretense is kept up too long.

Nevertheless it is a striking story: keen, satirical, biting deep—perhaps more deeply than any of the author's previous social studies. It also covers a rather wide range of characters, though, as one might expect, there is scarcely a really pleasant or attractive personality among them, as even the youthful Phyllida, an emancipated young woman of high ideals and independence of character, is not a very lovable young woman after all. She, too, remains somewhat artificial.

The text of the whole is taken from Shaw's "Major Barbara," to the effect that "poverty strikes dead the very souls of all who come within sight, sound or smell of it." Lady Ann and her commonplace husband are poor; that is, poor for people of their high station, with only a few thousand pounds a year and a position to maintain, and most of Lady Ann's confessions deal with her schemes for the exploitation of her relatives and friends. She has a very rich brother and also a rich brother-in-law, who, however, are under no illusions as to her character or that of her reprobate son, for whom she is steadily scheming a rich marriage. Her trickeries range from the merely small and sordid to the downright vicious and wicked. She is ready, for instance, to create a deliberately planned, nasty scandal to prevent her brother-in-law's getting the desired divorce, as she does not want him to remarry and thus, possibly, defeat her son of the succession to a title as his uncle's heir. She is also fully ready to condemn and, metaphorically, stone to death the guileless young girl whom her son has betrayed.

Society—and the lowlier walks of life, too—have their Lady Anns, and it is well to be provided with an accurate portrait of them; but it is an unpleasant business. Mr. McKenna, however, is far too clever to let her degenerate into a mere shrew or any sort of caricature. She has a "case," and sometimes may be justified; at least there is something to be said for her. She shows at her best in the episode wherein she rescues her wandering husband from the impending clutch of a theatrical siren with whom he is about to elope. In this scene she is truly admirable. As she puts it—"Until you have heard your husband described as 'Old Boy' by a half naked chorus girl who is slowly bleeding him to death you have not realized how highly your self-restraint may be tested." In that case Lady Ann was not only efficient but usefully so. And, to save the face of the whole, in the other cases she is happily defeated, so that all is well in spite of her. It must rank as among Mr. McKenna's cleverest but hardly among his best stories, as it remains too much of a *tour de force*.

HEARTBEAT—By Stacy Aumonier. Boni & Liveright.

MR. AUMONIER rises in this novel to an efficiency both of dramatic power and psychological subtlety notably above any of his preceding novels. His vogue in England has been considerable, but by some chance, he has not had a large audience here, although his work naturally attracted the attention of the critical reader. This novel may, possibly, have a stronger popular appeal, as it is more direct in its attack. There can hardly be two opinions as to the excellence of its workmanship and few will dispute the keenness of its insight. The conventional moralist may find something shocking—to the conventions—in its *denouement*, for it ends in unrelieved tragedy, a soul tragedy that, again from the conventional standpoint, is hopeless. And on the way to that end it boldly ventures into situations that in weaker hands might become melodramatic, and are, to say the least, lurid.

But they are real. Neither in incident nor in conception can the thing be properly called pathological. It is grim, sometimes sordid, sometimes brutal with the direct brutality of elemental tragedy, and there is no mincing matters. But there is also no leer, no morbid distortion of values. It is not a book for the *jeune fille* (if she is not an obsolete animal), but it has not a trace of the uncleanness that marks so much modern fiction.

It is the life story of a young woman who started with the handicap of unfortunate parentage: her father a very loftily placed, conservative aristocrat, in fact a Chancellor of the Exchequer, and her mother an Irish actress. Barbara does not know of her illegitimacy until after her father's death. But there has always been opposition between Barbara and her massive father and even before her enlightenment she is in revolt, and "like all young and healthy people, she conceived happiness an affair of escaping from the actuality of her environment." She goes on the stage with the help of George Champneys, a mature actor-manager of much experience. After some time Champneys falls desperately in love with her, and she marries him, without loving him, in the belief that love will "come later." She is not yet fully alive, but does not know it. They get on pretty well at first, but then comes a real passion, which naturally wrecks things. George surprises her with her lover and kills him in the ensuing fight. Barbara refuses to go back, on any terms, but there is a child coming.

After the birth of her son she is persuaded to let a benevolent lady adopt him, as she feels that she cannot give him the chance he deserves. And Barbara herself ends the story as the commercial mistress of a highly respectable man who comes to her aid—on the basis of a frank bargain, since "one must live."

So brief and bald an outline can only suggest the difficult subject matter which Mr. Aumonier has worked over with extraordinary restraint and skill—with something of the completeness and inexorableness of a Balzac; a very English and very modern Balzac with all the differences that implies. It will be called an unpleasant book, but it is assuredly a sincere and powerfully dramatic study.

The Negro: Past and Present

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slave insurrections like that of Nat Turner's band in 1831, and the deliberate withholding of education of any sort in some parts of the South during the thirty years or so before the war.

One of the most curiously informative things in the book is the recurring description of the many and various movements toward "repatriating" the negro; sending him back to Africa or colonizing him somewhere—at first in the then still open West or in Mexico, or the West Indies. The striking thing about all these movements is their utter failure. It is an entirely uniform result. He tells of one very significant case where a free negro who himself owned a number of slaves (a by no means uncommon thing a century ago) offered to free them all on condition that they go with him to Liberia. And only one accepted! The rest preferred to be sold as slaves where they were. The plain truth seems to be that the negro has not and practically never has had any real desire to go back to Africa.

Coming down to the present era Dr. Woodson discusses the negro's many achievements in freedom, in farming, in industry at the North, in music, art and the professions. Naturally he speaks emphatically of the practical disfranchisement of the negro in the South, and no one can question that, theoretically at least, he has full justice with him. There is no doubt that the negro in many places is not getting a "square deal." But there is no apparently simple solution of that problem in sight, and it wears a different aspect in Texas or Mississippi from that of pure theory.

Indeed, Dr. Woodson's book must leave the most sympathetically inclined reader—if he is also clear-headed—with a feeling of hopelessness as to any solution of the whole series of problems raised by the fact that white and black races must live, somehow, side by side. It is an acute case of that state of things which leads an English critic (Mr. Esme Wingfield-Stratford) to remark that "democracy has landed itself in difficulties," out of which there is no royal road. In any case there is nothing to be gained by either white or black in ignoring facts or pleasantly pretending that they are something different from what they manifestly are. Dr. Woodson's book is a useful contribution to a necessary discussion, but it is hard to see much light along the lines he would stress.

H. L. PANGBORN.